

006 BOY 2

You were supposed to catch it,  
Titus!

007 BOY 1

How am I supposed to catch it when  
you throw like a chicken! You'll  
never be a gladiator.

BOY 2 SIGHS, FRUSTRATED.

008 BOY 2

Let's try again...Where's the ball?

YOUNG NICHOLAS (10) RUNS TOWARD THEM.

009 YOUNG NICHOLAS

**START >>>** Hey! Is this yours?

010 BOY 1

Yeah. Give it here.

BOY 1 snatches the ball.

011 YOUNG NICHOLAS

Can I play too?

012 BOY 2

(suspiciously)

Aren't you the son of that  
merchant? The one with ships and  
farmland? Go play with your own  
ball!

013 YOUNG NICHOLAS

But I saw you playing and... It  
looks like fun.

014 BOY 1

(whispering to Boy 2)

We shouldn't let him play with us.

015 YOUNG NICHOLAS

Come on! Just one game. I'm agile!

016 BOY 2

That doesn't matter. You're one of  
those... *Christ-followers*...

017 BOY 1

My uncle says all those Christians  
are like lost sheep, following a  
silly shepherd.

BOY 1 MAKES A MOCKINGLY "BAAAA". BOY 2 LAUGHS.

018 YOUNG NICHOLAS

What does that have to do with playing ball?

019 BOY 2

Everything! My father says you Christians are nothing but trouble. You always anger the gods because you believe in just one god.

020 BOY 1

And everyone knows there are many powerful gods on Mount Olympus and in the temples!

021 YOUNG NICHOLAS

But... Jesus, our Lord, lived here in the world, with people like us.

022 BOY 2

(scoffs)

Your god lived here? And then what?

023 YOUNG NICHOLAS

Well... he died for us.

024 BOY 2

Died? What kind of god dies?

025 YOUNG NICHOLAS

Jesus is God, but He is also a Man.

026 BOY 1

A man can't be a god.

BOY 2 pushes YOUNG NICHOLAS slightly.

027 BOY 2

Keep your strange stories to yourself.

028 YOUNG NICHOLAS

But it's true! My father says -

BOY 2 SHOVES NICHOLAS, WHO STUMBLES.

029 BOY 2

Then take your man-god and see if he protects you.

THE BOYS PUNCH HIM. YOUNG NICHOLAS GRUNTS.

030 YOUNG NICHOLAS

Stop! Please!

031 BOY 1

(mockingly)

Where's your man-god now?

MORE PUNCHES. NICHOLAS TRIES TO SHIELD HIMSELF.  
ONE FINAL HARD PUNCH. NICHOLAS GRUNTS IN PAIN.

032 BOY 2

Come on, Titus, we're done here.

THE BOYS GRAB THE BALL AND LEAVE. YOUNG NICHOLAS  
SLOWLY GETS UP, SNIFFLING. FADE OUT SCENE.

<<< END

6

INT. NICHOLAS' HOME - EVENING

THE LOW CRACKLE OF A FIRE. EPIPHANIUS (30S) AND  
JOHANNA (20S) SIT AT A WOODEN TABLE. THE GENTLE  
CLINK OF CERAMIC DISHES AND CUPS AS THEY FINISH  
THEIR EVENING MEAL.

033 EPIPHANIUS

The ships have returned with fine goods from Alexandria. Spices, grains, wool. God has blessed us again this season. Let us share with those in need, Johanna.

034 JOHANNA

I was thinking of the widow Elara and her children. I heard they're having trouble finding work, even within our own community.

035 EPIPHANIUS

Then we shall prepare a generous portion of grain and some warm clothing. We can send a cart with it tomorrow and -

THE DOOR CREAKS OPEN. YOUNG NICHOLAS ENTERS.

036 YOUNG NICHOLAS

(sniffling)

Good evening Mama. Papa...

JOHANNA GASPS AND RUSHES TOWARDS HIM.

037 EPIPHANIUS

Nicholas! What happened to you?